



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL AND INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Aug. 16, 2024

Agenda Item: Fall 2024–Winter 2025 Furbearer and Wolf Trapping and Hunting Seasons and Quotas

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 Minutes

Background: Furbearer and wolf regulations are revisited annually with the Fish and Wildlife Commission to ensure the most recent data are available for consideration. Furbearer and wolf regulations were combined in 2022.

Public Involvement Process and Results: FWP staff have attended meetings about trapping and hunting of furbearers and wolves, which include regional Montana Trappers Association meetings. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period following the June commission meeting. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the August commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: Furbearer and wolf harvest is analyzed based on population and harvest monitoring data collected by FWP staff. Population and occupancy models assist in assessing specific species and populations.

Alternative A: The commission may approve the fall 2024–winter 2025 furbearer and wolf trapping and hunting seasons and quotas as presented by the department.

Alternative B: The commission may choose to adopt an amended version of the proposal presented by the department, to include alterations to wolf trapping season dates.

Agency Rationale and Recommendation: FWP recommends the commission adopt the furbearer and wolf trapping and hunting regulations as presented.

- A quota of 100 wolves for controlled removals in accordance with § 87-1-901(3)(c), MCA, commonly known as Senate Bill 200. This quota is for the total number of wolves that may be taken by a landowner or the landowner's agent on the landowner's property at any time without the purchase of a Class E-1 or Class E-2 wolf license when the wolf is a potential threat to human safety, livestock, or dogs. This quota shall also encompass all other management removals by FWP, USDA Wildlife Services, or others in defense of property or human safety.
- Maintaining the floating start date for wolf trapping within regions or portions of regions in the “estimated occupied range of grizzly bears.” This floating start may begin the Monday after Thanksgiving (Dec. 2, 2024), or any day thereafter as determined by FWP based upon a real time reading of conditions. If FWP does not select a date prior to Dec. 31, 2024, then the season will open on Dec. 31 and close on March 15, 2025. The floating start date would apply to the area described as the “estimated occupied range of grizzly bears” which is based on resident bears and is presented on page 14 in the 2023 regulations. Note that a federal court order may supersede this recommendation if litigation is not settled or adjudicated by the season start date, making the wolf trapping season Jan. 1 to Feb. 15, 2025.
- Wolf trapping outside of the “estimated occupied range of grizzly bears” will begin the first Monday after Thanksgiving (Dec. 2, 2024) and close on March 15, 2025. Note that a federal court order may supersede this recommendation if litigation is not settled or adjudicated by the season start date, making the season January 1 to February 15.
- A non-target capture of a lynx, wolverine, or grizzly bear by any trapping method shall be reported by FWP to the commission. This notice will not require a scheduled commission meeting, but the commission may convene if it feels the situation warrants it.

- The statewide wolf population is being reduced as directed by the legislature. To facilitate a measured reduction over time, FWP recommends a harvest quota of 334 wolves statewide distributed as follows:
 - Region 1 – 131 wolves,
 - Region 2 – 104 wolves,
 - Region 3 – 52 wolves (excluding Wolf Management Unit 313),
 - Region 4 – 20 wolves,
 - Region 5 – 11 wolves,
 - Region 6 – 4 wolves,
 - Region 7 – 6 wolves,
 - Wolf Management Unit 313 – 6 wolves.
- FWP will also add clarifying language about snares in ground sets, littering, killing sets, wolf traps, bobcat reporting requirements, beaver damage permitting, marten reporting, and wolverine seasons as detailed on the accompanying list of proposed changes.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the fall 2024–winter 2025 furbearer and wolf trapping and hunting seasons and quotas as presented by the department and in the regulation mockup, with all other aspects regarding prior seasons and regulations included, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations.